

# Neighbor, neighbor, spare that tree

by Jay Weidman, Park Ranger

Every year rangers receive numerous calls from property owners in adjoining subdivisions, asking for permission to cut down dead or dying trees on public property. Although the US Army Corps of Engineers no longer cuts threatening trees, rangers typically oblige by marking the trees and issuing a "Specified Acts Permit" which allows the adjacent property owner to cut down the offending trees which are deemed a threat to life, limb, or property.

In many cases, these trees are not a serious threat to any person or property, but just happen to be nearby and look bad or dangerous. Most people see a standing dead tree as an eyesore. However, to many other lake area dwellers, these trees are called home.

Nearly all species of woodpeckers found in the Southeastern United States use dead trees as a place to hollow out nest cavities. These woodpecker nests serve as first class housing for many different birds in years to come. Carolina wrens, nuthatches (small, grey birds with the white eye patches and pointy beaks), and many other species use these dead trees as an important place to hunt insects for food for themselves and their young.

Flying squirrel fans may also notice activity near standing dead trees in the twilight hours. These small, big eyed squirrels are a delight to watch as they glide from tree to tree. They often become accustomed to looking for a treat of raisins or unsalted peanuts (no shell) when placed on or near a standing dead tree.



**Dead trees provide a major source of food and shelter for numerous woodland creatures. Many of them are small and seldom noticed by the average person.**

Flying squirrels often put on a personal "air show" once they have grown accustomed to a generous and quiet spectator.

Please consider the dead trees on the public property around Thurmond Lake as an opportunity. Standing dead trees offer an opportunity for birds and small mammals to prosper. These same trees also offer exciting opportunities for the human neighbors to enjoy viewing the smaller residents of the lake shore community.



Resource Manager  
J. Strom Thurmond Resource Office  
Route 1, Box 12,  
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## Have you ever heard of geocaching?

by Jill Davis, Park Ranger

Small handheld global positioning system (GPS) units were once the high-tech equipment of the US military or a well heeled big game hunter. Now, a cellular phone sized GPS is highly accurate and can be purchased for less than \$100. A few years ago, someone with a GPS unit came up with a technical game of hide-and-seek called Geocaching (pronounced Geocashing.)

Geocaching is a worldwide adventure game for GPS users. The basic idea is to have individuals and organizations set up "caches" all over the world and share the locations of these caches by posting the latitude and longitude of the hidden item on the Internet. GPS users can then use the location coordinates to find the caches. Once found, the visitor must sign the logbook to receive their cache. The trinkets serve as a minuscule reward system for the searcher. The visitor who finds the cache puts something in and takes something out. This exchange also makes the cache an interactive experience with the searchers who have found or will find the same location. The real reward is the adventure itself.

The coordinates are posted all in one place at the geocaching.com web site. Players can search for cache locations by zip code, by state or even by country. This is a fairly new phenomenon that appeals to families and individuals alike. The level of difficulty can range from hardcore rock climbing to wheelchair accessible. The commonality geocachers share is the thrill of the hide and seek, as well as love for their public lands and historic places. As you will see, most caches are hidden in areas that are historic points of interest, public lands and other unique places.

There are several geocaches hidden here at Thurmond Lake. Some of the geocaches are in developed US Army Corps of Engineers parks and some require a more adventurous soul. In fact, there is even one tricky geocache just outside our Visitor Center! We are glad to have geocachers in this vicinity. Most of them carry trash bags and practice what they call "cache-in-trash-out" while on their hunt.

The Corps of Engineers at Thurmond Lake recently celebrated National Public Lands Day on September 24. Many local organizations participated in various projects to help upkeep their Public Lands and parks around the lake. The Geocachers Association used their GPS equipment and sense of adventure to find the different work projects.

If you are interested in learning more about geocaching, check out the geocaching.com website. Adventure is waiting!



**Larry and Mary Johnson of Pinellas Park, Florida are all smiles after finding a hidden Thurmond Lake geocache with their handheld GPS unit.**

## Winter boating tips

by David Quebedeaux, Park Ranger

Winter is just around the corner. Here are a few tips for the winter.

- Know the facts about hyperthermia... It can kill!
- Wear a life jacket over warm clothing.
- Check the weather report before launching.
- Bring a cell phone.
- Plan the boat trip. Tell someone about it.
- Make sure the boat is dependable. Help may be scarce during the winter.
- After each boat trip, drain all water from outboard motors to prevent freeze damage.



# Restoring the destruction



Before herbicide application



After herbicide application



A contractor using a blower applies herbicide granules in a pine beetle salvage area.

by David Williamson, Park Ranger

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is preparing pine beetle infestation areas for the next generation of trees. Between the years 2002-2004, Thurmond Lake lost 2,310 acres of pine forests to southern pine beetle infestations. The infested trees on these sites were cut and removed in order to stop the spread of these destructive insects. Replanting these sites without proper preparation is ineffective and will yield a poor forest stand.

With no site preparation work undertaken, sweet gum trees and other quick growing undesirable hardwood trees take over and will out compete any new pine seedlings for the available nutrients. The proper use of specific herbicides will remove these undesirable hardwoods and give the new pine seedlings a competitive chance to retain the site part of the pine forest. Through a contract with the New Ellenton South Carolina contractor, the Corps of Engineers treated 456 acres of pine beetle salvage areas this year with Dupont Velpar ULW to prepare these sites for planting the next generation of pines next winter.

Corps Rangers marked all the treatment areas and supplied accurate acreages through the use of GPS technology so the amount of chemical applied on each site was correct for the intended results. The blowers used to spread the herbicide granules were calibrated for the correct application rate. After the treatment, the amount of chemical remaining in the blower backpack was weighed and checked for application accuracy.

The herbicide is activated by rain with results showing up in 3 to 4 weeks after sufficient rainfall. Maximum results are evident within 12 months depending on the amount of rain received, application rate, and soil texture. The contract had an early June finish date but was completed in early May between regular wet periods. This early application, a knowledgeable contractor, and favorable weather patterns combined to make the application a success. Now that the invader species of vegetation are gone, the area can be planted with trees that will develop into a healthy forest.

## Call a ranger-it's free

by Pepper Shields, Park Ranger

Many potential purchasers often have questions about land near Thurmond Lake such as: Can I get a boat dock permit, can I keep the boat dock that is already there, can I trim the vegetation and trees blocking my lake view, and what can I do on the public land between my lot and the lake.

The best way to get these questions answered is to call (800) 533-3478 and arrange to meet with a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Ranger on site before purchasing. The helpful and knowledgeable Rangers can answer any questions about the adjacent public lands before any buyer's remorse sets in. The best time to ask a Ranger shoreline questions is anytime... and it's free.



## To buoy or not to buoy, that is the question

by Zach Harkness, Park Ranger



Above is a slow-no-wake buoy.

The placement of "Slow-No Wake" buoys has been a hot item around the lake this summer. It seems like some of the best water skiing areas on the lake happen to be located in the back of coves, around private boat docks and mooring facilities, which isn't sitting too well with adjacent property owners.

In the past few months, several letters and phone calls have come in from private individuals requesting the placement of "Slow-No Wake" buoys around their docks to regulate boat operators and water skiers.

With over one hundred subdivisions, quasi-public and private organizations bordering the lake, numerous requests for buoys are received each year. Unfortunately, these requests cannot be honored.

Presently, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains nearly 500 aides to navigation around Thurmond Lake. These navigation aides are used to mark the left and right limits of the main channel with nun and can buoys, mark the mid channel on the upper reaches of the lake, to provide safe access from all public boat ramps to the main channel, to warn boaters of major bridges and power line crossings and to protect public facilities.

All hope is not lost for Thurmond Lake dock owners though. Both Georgia and South Carolina have state boating laws that require all boat operators to operate their vessel at a safe speed. Failure to regulate speed is defined as operating a boat or personal watercraft (PWC) at speeds that may cause danger, injury, damage, or unnecessary inconvenience.

South Carolina requires that a boat operator may not operate a boat or PWC in excess of idle speed within 50 feet of a moored or anchored boat, pier or dock. In Georgia, no person may operate any vessel or tow a person or persons on water skis, an aquaplane, a surfboard, or any similar device on the waters of the state at a speed greater than idle speed within 100 feet of any vessel which is moored, anchored, or adrift outside normal traffic channels, or any wharf, dock, pier, piling, bridge structure or abutment, person in the water, or shoreline adjacent to a full-time or part-time residence, public park, public beach, public swimming area, marina, restaurant, or other public use area. Both states and the Corps of Engineers may enforce these operating regulations.

So the next time a skier buzzes by a dock like an annoying gnat around the ear, get the registration number off the boat and report it to the Georgia or South Carolina Department of Natural Resources or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Thurmond Lake Office. Personnel from these agencies will be glad to provide assistance and monitor activity when in the area.

## Three new fishing piers on Thurmond Lake

by David Quebedeaux, Park Ranger

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at J. Strom Thurmond Lake have placed three new fishing piers into service this summer. Petersburg campground, Amity day-use park, and Clarks Hill day-use park each now have a state of the art floating fishing pier for public use.

All three parks had a floating fishing pier in the past, but they were showing age and not nearly as well built as the structures in place now.

"We used some of the metal from the original structures to save on the final cost," said Mike Johnson of Ferguson-Williams Inc.

He added, "After welding the pier's structural frame, F&W Inc. had it hot galvanize dipped and decked with a non-slip resin and recycled wood product. Then, new encapsulated floats were added to finish off the facility."

The docks were built so well that they have a long service life and require little maintenance, said Johnson.

The Petersburg Park pier is for the use of campers staying overnight in the park. The Clarks Hill and Amity fishing piers should offer quality fishing opportunities to anglers out for the day. For additional information, please call 1-(800) 533-3478 ext 1147. GPS coordinates for the new fishing piers: Petersburg Park – N 33° 39.751 W 082° 15.449, Amity Park – N 33° 38.769 W 082° 28.519, Clarks Hill Park – N 33° 39.226 W 082° 13.637.